



CITY OF BATON ROUGE
PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Study Guide
Entry Probation Series
Written Examination

- The Entry Probation Series exam is required for the following classifications: Juvenile Probation Officer, Juvenile Probation Officer/POST Certified, Probation Officer, and Probation Officer/POST Certified.
- This booklet contains SAMPLE QUESTIONS ONLY. Studying this booklet will not necessarily improve your exam score.

PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THIS STUDY GUIDE

This guide was developed to help you prepare to take the written exam for Entry Probation. It contains general exam-taking advice and also provides specific information related to the exam content. This information includes the subject areas covered by the exam, the kinds of questions to expect, strategies for approaching the questions, and sample questions. Though this information cannot guarantee a higher exam score, it can give you direction for your exam preparation that will assist you in doing your best.

PREPARING TO TAKE THE EXAM

Before the Day of the Exam

- Review this guide to get familiar with the content of the exam. Knowing about the topics and kinds of questions that will be in the exam will ensure that you will not be surprised by the content of the exam or the manner in which it is presented. This can improve your ability to demonstrate your job potential.
- Make sure that you know where the exam will be administered and all of the relevant details, such as where to park, where to report for the exam, and what identification is required.

On the Day of the Exam

- Make sure that you are well rested and have eaten. These things will help your concentration during the exam.
- Plan your day to allow plenty of time to get yourself prepared and get to the exam site. Allow enough time to cope with weather, traffic, parking, etc. Hurrying creates anxiety, so do not put yourself in the position of having to hurry.
- Listen carefully to all instructions from the exam administrator. Make sure that you understand the instructions and carry them out correctly. Ask questions at the proper time before the exam begins if you are unsure of any aspect of what you should do during the exam.

GENERAL EXAM TAKING TIPS

- Use your time carefully. The time limit should provide you with more than enough time if you move through the exam steadily and do not spend too much time on any one question.
- Read the questions and answer choices carefully. Read all of the answer choices before you select an answer.
- If you come to a question that is especially difficult, skip that question and come back to it later if you have time.
- Answer every question. Scores are based on the number of correct answers. You will receive no credit if you leave an answer space blank. It is to your advantage to use your best judgment to make a choice among the answer choices provided.

THE ENTRY PROBATION WRITTEN EXAM

The written exam for Entry Probation is based upon a job study that identified the most important knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the job successfully. These areas include:

- your skill in reading, interpreting and applying written information.
- your knowledge of techniques and concepts that promote effective interaction with others.
- your ability to prepare grammatically correct written documents.
- your knowledge of terminology, concepts, and theories related to human behavior.

All of the exam questions are presented in a multiple-choice format. Each question is identified by a question number that is followed by a question statement. After the question statement, there are between two and four answer choices. You should read all of the answer choices and then choose the best answer. **Each question has only one correct answer.**

EXAM SECTION 1: READING WITH UNDERSTANDING

This exam section contains twenty (20) questions designed to assess your ability to accurately read and interpret written information. The exam questions will be based on brief reading passages similar to the type of reading that is encountered on the job, such as work procedures and technical information related to probation work.

A good strategy to use for this type of question is to read through the entire reading passage, then read each of the questions, and finally refer back to the passage as you answer each question. When reading each question, determine what information the question is specifically looking for by giving careful consideration to each of the words used to convey meaning. Does the question ask about a cause or effect? Does it ask you to identify something that is strongest or weakest?

It is important that you select your answer solely based upon the information provided. The exam questions are designed to assess your ability to correctly interpret what is provided, not to assess your knowledge of the subject area addressed by the reading passage.

Examples of these types of questions are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

Use the reading passage below to answer the three (3) questions that follow.

Policy 450.3 Probation Searches

It is department policy to respect the fundamental privacy rights of individuals. Department members will conduct searches in strict observance of the constitutional rights of the persons being searched. Accordingly, those being searched must be advised of the reason for the search and how the search will be conducted. All searches shall be conducted in a thorough and professional manner that demonstrates consideration for the rights and property of the probationers and/or the public. Individuals should be treated with courtesy and respect and property should be left in a condition as close as reasonably possible to its pre-search condition.

All searches shall be related to a proper probation purpose. This includes searches done to ascertain whether the probationer is complying with the terms of probation. Searches shall be consistent with the scope of the probation order and shall not be conducted for arbitrary and capricious reasons.

1. According to the policy, explaining the specific actions that will take place during a search to the person who is about to be searched is:
 - A. not required by the policy.
 - B. recommended as a courtesy.
 - C. required to demonstrate professionalism.
 - D. required to ensure the person's constitutional rights are upheld.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #1 is response choice “D”. The second sentence addresses constitutional rights. The next sentence begins with the word “accordingly” which indicates that what follows results from that preceding statement. That sentence includes the requirement to advise, or explain, the search process. Though the policy also notes that searches should be conducted in a professional and courteous manner, these aspects do not relate to the specific action of explaining the reason for the search.

2. In the second paragraph of the reading passage, the term “ascertain” is used to indicate which of the following?
 - A. To finish.
 - B. To find out.
 - C. To monitor.
 - D. To document.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #2 is response choice “B”. The definition of the word “ascertain” is to find something out or make sure of. This definition is consistent with the rest of the sentence which is about determining if probationers are meeting the requirements of their probation.

3. The policy specifically directs those who conduct searches to do so with attention to all of the following except:
 - A. thoroughness.
 - B. staying out of public view.
 - C. the condition of the premises.
 - D. the terms of a person's probation.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #3 is response choice “B”. Response choice B is not addressed in the paragraph. Response choice A is addressed in the third sentence of the first paragraph. Response choice C is addressed in the fourth sentence of the first paragraph. Response choice D is addressed in the second sentence of the second paragraph.

EXAM SECTION 2: INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

This exam section contains twenty (20) questions that evaluate your knowledge of techniques and concepts that promote effective interaction with others such as how to communicate clearly, effectively persuade or motivate others, and resolve conflict. Each question will present a situation and ask that you select the most effective response, given the circumstances. For this type of question, it is important to remember to view the question from the perspective of how a government agency would want its employees to respond to its customers and clients in the environment in which the work takes place.

Examples of the types of questions in this exam section are shown below. Each question is followed by an explanation of the correct answer.

4. When trying to persuade a person to change his/her behavior, you should view that person:
- A. within the context of common social norms.
 - B. as a member of a particular demographic group.
 - C. within the framework of common personality types.
 - D. as having a distinct set of values and a unique personality.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #4 is response choice “D”. When interacting with individuals, it is important to recognize that each person is unique, having their own distinct personality and values. Social norms, demographics, and personality types are associated with describing groups. Though such things may shape an individual, recognizing the uniqueness of the person is most useful in one-on-one interactions.

5. If you are interacting with someone and the situation has become confrontational, the other person's ability to exert power over you will be mostly due to his/her ability to:
- A. end the interaction.
 - B. convey a range of feelings.
 - C. cause you to react emotionally.
 - D. explain the basis for his/her viewpoint.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #5 is response choice “C”. When what a person says or does prompts us to react rather than process information and plan how to best respond, that person gains control in the interaction. Being able to convey feelings or explain a viewpoint may be persuasive or provide understanding, but they do not change the power in the interaction. Similarly, walking away, while affecting the outcome, does not give a person more power in the interaction.

6. Which of the following is the best example of active listening when conversing with someone?
- A. Maintaining neutral facial expressions.
 - B. Directly facing the person and adjusting your posture towards them.
 - C. Making sure that your eyes are at the same level as the other person.
 - D. Commenting on what the person says after each thought is expressed.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #6 is response choice “B”. Active listening involves engagement with the speaker, much of which is conveyed through non-verbal communication. Facing the speaker and adjusting your posture towards them conveys interest and allows you to pay attention to their words, gestures, and facial expressions. A neutral facial expression does not allow you to convey understanding and may unnerve the other person if they expect you to react in some way. Though eye contact is important, this can be done without the eyes being on the same level. Commenting after each thought may disrupt the train of thought for both you and the other person.

EXAM SECTION 3: WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

This exam section contains twenty (20) questions that assess your ability to prepare grammatically correct written documents. You will review sentences and indicate whether they are correct or incorrect with regard to grammar and punctuation. The most effective approach for doing your best in this section is to review basic grammar and punctuation rules prior to taking the exam. Then, when taking the exam, sound each sentence out mentally to be certain that you are actually reading every word as it is presented. Sometimes, our eyes may see something that is incorrect, but our brain interprets it as what it expects to see, rather than what is actually there.

Examples of the types of questions in this exam section are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

Instructions: Determine whether each sentence below is grammatically correct. Read the sentence and then use the answer key below to record your answer on the answer sheet:

KEY

A = The sentence is grammatically correct.

B = The sentence is grammatically incorrect.

The kinds of errors you will find include incomplete sentences, incorrect word usage, and subject/verb disagreements. There are no intentional errors in spelling, punctuation, or capitalization.

7. All of the violations, including the most recent one, is documented in the report.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #7 is response choice “B”. The sentence is grammatically incorrect because there is a subject/verb disagreement. The “violations” are plural, but the verb “is” is singular. A good way to identify this disagreement is to read the sentence without the additional clause about the most recent violation (All of the violations is/are documented in the report). Then, it is clear that the correct verb form for this sentence is “are” rather than “is”.

8. Is regularly failing to report for work.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #8 is response choice “B”. This sentence is grammatically incorrect because it is an incomplete sentence or sentence fragment. The sentence is missing a subject. It should indicate who is failing to report for work. For example, the sentence might read: Mr. Jones is regularly failing to report for work.

9. Her disruptive behavior was at a peek during the group session.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #9 is response choice “B”. This sentence is grammatically incorrect due to an incorrect word choice. The word “peek” means to look quickly. The correct word to use in this sentence is “peak” which means maximum or highest point.

EXAM SECTION 4: HUMAN BEHAVIOR

This exam section contains twenty (20) questions that assess your knowledge of terminology, concepts, and theories related to human behavior. Question content is focused on the type and level of knowledge that those working in the probation field use in their work. This includes topics such as how certain behaviors are described or classified, theories of motivation, mental processes, and common disorders.

A good strategy for answering questions in this section is to prepare before the exam by reviewing the areas described above. Then, when taking the exam, identify the issue or area addressed by the question, such as a type of disorder or behavior. When you have clarified the concept, you should be better able to draw upon your knowledge base and thoughtfully consider the response choices.

Examples of the types of questions in this exam section are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

10. Which of the following behaviors is most commonly associated with anxiety disorders?
- A. Excessive dependency.
 - B. False or irrational beliefs.
 - C. Lack of interest or concern.
 - D. Avoidance of everyday activities.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #10 is response choice “D”. The symptoms of anxiety disorders often include strong feelings of tension, intense apprehension, and excessive worry. As a result, avoidance of everyday activities is a behavior that those with the disorder often display. The other response choices are behaviors associated with other disorders.

11. Which of the following is term used to identify the tendency to search and weigh information that sustains preconceptions more strongly than information that challenges them?
- A. Spotlight effect.
 - B. Self-serving bias.
 - C. Confirmation bias.
 - D. Matching phenomenon.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #11 is response choice “C”. Confirmation bias is a concept used in social psychology to describe the tendency to limit information gathering to that which confirms one's existing beliefs. The other response choices are terms used to describe other tendencies.

12. Attempting to modify behavior through the use of rewards and reinforcement is most associated with which of the following theories of motivation?
- A. Drive theory of motivation.
 - B. Instinct theory of motivation.
 - C. Incentive theory of motivation.
 - D. Humanistic theory of motivation.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #12 is response choice “C”. The incentive theory of motivation suggests that external rewards are what motivate people to pursue certain courses of action. The other response choices are additional theories of motivation.

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

If you feel that you would benefit from more practice, your local library or relevant internet web sites may have reference materials that can be helpful. This is true for all of the subject areas covered by the Entry Probation written exam.